

U.S. Patent Application No. 09/996,518
Reply to Office Action dated April 17, 2006

PATENT
450100-03654

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of the application are respectfully requested in view of the amendments and remarks herewith. The present amendment is being made to facilitate prosecution of the application.

I. STATUS OF THE CLAIMS AND FORMAL MATTERS

Claims 1, 3-4, and 7-9 are pending. Claims 1 and 7 are independent. Claims 2 and 5-6 have been canceled, without prejudice or disclaimer of subject matter. New claims 7-9 have been added. Claims 1, 3, and 4 have been amended. Support for this amendment is provided throughout the Specification as originally filed, and specifically on page 11 in lines 21-22. No new matter has been introduced by this amendment.

Changes to the claims are not made for the purpose of patentability within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §101, §102, §103, or §112. Rather, these changes are made simply for clarification and to round out the scope of protection to which Applicants are entitled.

II. REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. §112

Claims 1-4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph. Applicants respectfully submit that the present amendment obviates this rejection.

Claim 3 was further rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, for allegedly failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter regarded as the invention. Applicants respectfully submit that the present amendment obviates this rejection.

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III. REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 1 and 4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as allegedly unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,997,026 to Ozeki in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,453,000 to Lebensfeld.

Claim 1 recites the allowable subject matter of claim 2.

Therefore, for at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 1 is patentable.

Claim 7 is similar in scope to claim 1, and is therefore patentable for similar reasons.

IV. DEPENDENT CLAIMS

The other claims in this application are each dependent from one of the independent claims discussed above, and are therefore patentable for at least the same reasons. Since each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual reconsideration of the patentability of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

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CONCLUSION

Applicants thank the Examiner for noting the allowable subject matter.

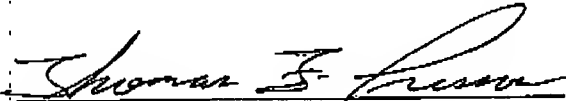
Please charge any additional fees that may be needed, and credit any overpayment, to our Deposit Account No. 50-0320.

Applicants respectfully submit that all of the claims are in condition for allowance and request early passage to issue of the present application.

Respectfully submitted,

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